

WOMEN OF COURAGE

I feel highly honored to be here today where we are celebrating not just history but the history of Victory. The legend of Rosa Parks is the victory of good over evil and light over darkness.

I am fascinated by the choice of words for the theme of this and similar celebrations 'Women of Courage'. By the dictionary definition of the word "Courage" i.e. to venture, persevere, withstand danger, fear or difficulty, the word denotes a manly virtue. The question then is 'What does Rosa Parks and the other women before and after her have to do with Courage? In order to answer this question we need to look at the typology of the courage exhibited by this our fore bear –Rosa Parks. It is what I have called the **Courage of Intuitive Clarity**. This is the certainty and clarity about right and wrong, about when to be quiet and when to speak up, when to be docile and when to act. In describing the reason for her historic resistance she was quoted as saying '*Our mistreatment was not just right and I was tired of it*'.

What we see here is a convergence of the manly virtue –Courage and the womanly virtue-Intuitive Clarity. The result is being a tool in the setting into motion of events whose time had come.

FEMINIZATION OF COURAGE

This again is my coinage which I want to locate in the context of two topical issues of our time, which like the struggle against racial inequity is also anchored in the quest for Justice. I am talking of the quest for Gender Equity or Gender Justice and the Justice of Accountability or the fight against corruption.

GENDER EQUITY: As the conversation to actualize gender justice is going on at the macro level of equitable space to women in politics, governance etc, equal space must be accorded to the micro connections of gender equity. These are the points where the issues connect with the human beings especially the under-privileged. Examples are these are access to justice in micro issues like family and matrimonial causes, protection from violence, access to employment and other issues of social vulnerability. It is in these issues that the real negligence of inequity are pronounced.

JUSTICE OF ACCOUNTABILITY: Similarly in the campaign against corruption and agitation for judicious use of resources, it is necessary to capture the

micro connections between accountability and the quality of life of the vulnerable groups. To these groups, it is not just a governance but a life and death issue.

Interacting with these issues at the point of interface with the human being enables the ability to stand in the experience, and establish empathy with the more pronounced victims. This empathy diminishes the abstractions and simplifies the issues into right and wrong. This simplification and resultant clarity sustains the passion even when the road to victory is still far.

The simplification into right and wrong also limits the choices so that when like Ms Parks we find ourselves occupying that critical space, we will fight with tenacity until victory is assured. This tenacity borne of intuitive clarity of right and wrong, of good and evil is the spelling of Courage.